DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 305 538 CG 021 548

AUTHOR Arias, Ileana
TITLE Economic, Social, and Psychological Resources as Predictors of Victimization.
SPONS AGENCY Georgia Univ., Athens. Inst. for Behavioral Research.
PUB DATE Aug 88
GRANT NIMH-MH-35340
NOTE 18p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems (38th, Atlanta, GA, August 21-23, 1988).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Battered Women; *Economic Factors; *Family Violence; *High Risk Persons; *Predictor Variables; *Psychological Characteristics; *Social Influences; Victims of Crime

ABSTRACT

While research has identified several factors related to female domestic violence victims, the cross-sectional methodologies used make it difficult to determine whether these factors predispose the individual to victimization. This study used a longitudinal design to assess the predictive power of indices of economic, social, and psychological resources found to be related to victimization among women by previous studies. Individuals engaged to be married for the first time were recruited through newpaper and radio advertisements. Volunteer couples were assessed approximately 1 month before their wedding dates and again 6 months and 18 months after their weddings. Data were obtained from 315 wives at each of the three assessment periods. Eighteen months after their weddings, 80 wives reported being the victims of at least one incident of their husband's physical aggression during the past year. The results support the utility of certain premarital and early marital economic and psychological resources as significant predictors of victimization status and variance in extent of victimization among victimized wives. Women with lower incomes and who were less secure with their jobs and with their economic situations generally were more likely to be victims of their husbands' violence and to experience more frequent and severe domestic violence. Women who were less aggressive, especially in the marriage, and who reported greater negative stress were more likely to be victims and to experience greater severity and frequency of domestic violence. Social support resources did not prove to be significant predictors of victimization. (NB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED305538

CG 021548

Economic, Social, and Psychological Resources as Predictors of Victimization

Ileana Arias
Department of Psychology
University of Georgia
Athens, GA 30602

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Ileana Arias

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Running head: Predictors of Victimization

Paper presented at the 38th Annual Meeting of the Society for the Study of Social Problems, Atlanta, Georgia, August, 1988. This research was supported in part by NIMH grant #MH-35340 and the Institute for Behavioral Research at the University of Georgia.

Economic, Social, and Psychological Resources as Predictors of Victimization

Recent attention (cf. Arias & O'Leary, 1988; Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986; Sedlak, Bowen, Hotaling, & Sugarman, 1985) has been devoted to the identification of risk or vulnerability factors in domestic violence. By identifying such risk factors, we increase the accuracy of prediction and, thereby, the efficacy of prevention efforts. Additionally, the identification of risk factors may suggest mechanisms that cause or maintain domestic violence, and, that have to be altered in order to reduce the prevalence of the phenomenon.

Race, age, annual income and occupation, alcohol and drug use, domestic violence in the family of origin, and social isolation or lack of social support have been found to be related to being a victim of domestic violence among women (Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986). Some of these factors are found to be indicators of victimization more consistently than others. However, regardless of their consistency or reliability, studies examining risk factors of victimization have used cross-sectional methodologies. Hence, it has been difficult to determine whether or not these factors, or the mechanisms they are indicative of, predispose the individual to victimization. Some of these victim characteristics, such as social isolation, may be a consequence of the victimization. Alternatively, both victimization and markers thereof may be the result of a third, undetected variable.

The present study employed a longitudinal design in order to assess the predictive power of various indeces of economic,

social, and psychological resources previously found related to victimization among women by cross-sectional methodologies. Individuals engaged to be married for the first time were recruited through newspaper and radio advertisements. Couples volunteering for participation were assessed approximately one month before their wedding dates and, again, six months and one and one half years after the wedding took place.

Method

Subjects

Couples engaged to be married were recruited in counties in upstate New York and Long Island, New York. Participating couples were representative of the populations sampled in these two counties regarding age of first marriage, religious affiliation, and economic backgrounds. However, the study's sample was characterized by an average of two more years of education than the mean census sample.

Only wives who fully completed participation at each of the three assessment periods (N = 315) were included in the current analyses. The women who did not carry out marriage plans and those who discontinued their participation, following either the first or second assessment, did not differ significantly from the wives who continued to participate on any of the assessed variables. A brief summary of some demographic characteristics of the women participating in the study is presented in Table 1.

Insert Table 1 about here

No significant differences emerged as a function of victimization status a year and a half after marriage.

Measures

In addition to a routine demographic questionnaire, all respondents completed the following:

Economic resources. Nonstandardized questionnaires were employed to assess subjects' economic resources before marriage and at six months after marriage. In addition to providing information about individual annual income and employment status (e.g., employed full-time or part-time, unemployed, etc.), participants provided ratings of their experienced, subjective job security, general economic security, and satisfaction with their current standard of living using 5-point Likert scales.

Social resources. Before the marriage and six months after participants were asked to indicate: (1) whether or not they had someone to turn to for financial or emotional support other than their partners; (2) who they could turn to for financial or emotional support (e.g., family, friends, clergy, organized groups, etc.); (3) whether or not they could temporarily live with someone if they should need temporary shelter outside the home; and (4) who they could contact for temporary shelter.

Psychological resources. Several standardized questionnaires were employed to assess psychological factors that might be predictive of victimization. The Life Experiences Survey (LES; Sarason, Johnson, & Siegel, 1978) was employed to index the total absolute occurrence of stressful life events, the occurrence and impact of positive stressful events, and the occurrence and impact of negative stressful events.

Aggression specific to the spouse was assessed by the

Spouse-Specific Assertiveness Inventory (SSAI; O'Leary & Curley, 1986). General aggressive tendencies, that is, aggression expressed across persons and across situations, were assessed by the Aggression subscale of the Personality Research Form (PRF-E; Jackson, 1974). The PRF-E was employed to assess other personality characteristics that might be predictive of victimization of domestic violence, namely: Abasement, Autonomy, Defendence, Dominance, and Impulsivity.

Finally, at six months after marriage only, participants' liberal/conservative views about women in general were assessed using the Attitudes Toward Women Scale (ATWS; Spence & Helmreich, 1978). Feelings of inferirority/superiority vis a vis the spouse were assessed at six months after marriage employing a 9-point Likert scale.

Procedure

All couples visited the Marital Studies Programs at the State University of New York at Stony Brook and at Syracuse University. Questionnaires were completed by individuals at each assessment in separate rooms or by both partners in the same room but in the presence of a research assistant in order to emphasize confidentiality vis a vis the spouse and to maiximize candid self-reporting.

Results

At a year and a half after marriage, 80 wives or 25% of the sample, using Straus's Conflict Tactics Scale (1979) reported being the victims of at least one incident of their husbands' physical aggression during the year prior to the assessment. Three separate logistic regression analyses were conducted in

order to determine the ability of several indeces of economic, social, and psychological resources assessed before marriage to predict victimization status one and one half years postmarriage. The results of these analyses are presented in Table 2. Separate

Insert Table 2 about here

logistic regression analyses were conducted to assess the predictability of economic, social, and psychological resources at six months after marriage. These results are presented in Table 3. Additionally, separate stepwise regression analyses were conducted to examine the ability of premarital (see Table 4) and early marital (see Table 5) indicators of economic, social,

Insert Tables 3, 4, and 5 about here

and psychological factors in accounting for variance in the extent of victimization (severity of physical aggression multiplied by frequency of victimization) among wives victimized one and one half years after marriage.

Premarital Predictors of Victimization Status

Economic resources. Of the economic resources assessed before marriage and examined only annual income proved to be a significant predictor of postmarital victimization (X^2 (1) = 3.88, $p < .05$). Wives who were victims of their husbands' physical aggression by the end of the first year and a half of marriage reported lower individual annual incomes than wives who were not so victimized.

Social resources. None of the sources of social support

assessed before marriage were able to significantly predict victimization by the end of the first year and a half of marriage. However, there was a tendency for the number of available sources of support before marriage to predict victimization (X^2 (1) = 3.02, p = .08), suggesting that victimized wives tended to report fewer and less varied sources of support, financial and emotional, prior to marriage.

Psychological resources. Of all the psychological variables assessed before marriage only aggression significantly predicted victimization status by the end of the first year and a half of marriage. Women who were victimized were less generally aggressive (X^2 (1) = 5.07, $p < .01$) and less aggressive with their husbands in particular (X^2 (1) = 8.46, $p < .01$) before marriage than women who were not victims of their husbands' physical aggression.

Early Marital Predictors of Victimization

Economic resources. Annual income assessed six months after marriage no longer significantly predicted victimization status at one and a half years after marriage. However, economic security did predict victimization status. Women who were victimized by the end of the first year and a half of marriage were more likely to report economic insecurity than nonvictimized women (X^2 (1) = 4.56, $p < .05$).

Social resources. Indicators of sources of financial and emotional support available to subjects at six months after marriage did not predict victimization status.

Psychological resources. Again, of all the psychological variables assessed, only aggression vis a vis the husband

significantly predicted victimization status (X^2 (1) = 24.29, p = .0001), suggesting that victimized wives were less aggressive with their husbands during the first six months of marriage than nonvictimized wives. There was a trend for negative stress experienced during the first six months of marriage to predict victimization status (X^2 (1) = 3.21, p = .07); victimized women tended to report experiencing higher levels of negative stress during the first six months of marriage than nonvictimized women.

Premarital Predictors of the Extent of Victimization

Economic resources. Job security experienced before marriage accounted for a significant (F (1, 57) = 7.78, p < .01) 12% of the variance in extent of victimization among wives victimized by the end of the first year and a half of marriage. No other economic resource variable was able to account for a significant proportion of variance in extent of victimization.

Psychological resources. Spouse-specific aggression before marriage was able to account for a significant (F (1, 59) = 10.61, p < .01) 15% of the variance in the extent of victimization among victimized wives. Again, no other variable was able to account for any additional significant amount of variance.

Early Marital Predictors of the Extent of Victimization

Economic resources. Again, job security experienced during the first six months of marriage accounted for a significant amount of variance, 13%, in extent of victimization among victimized wives (F (1, 60) = 8.91, p < .01). No other early marital indicator of economic resources accounted for significant

variance.

Psychological resources. Negative stress experienced during the first six months of marriage was the only psychological variable accounting for a significant portion of variance, 10%, in the extent of victimization among victimized wives (F (1, 68) = 7.38, $p < .01$).

No social resource factor assessed before marriage or at six months after marriage proved to account for a significant amount of variance in the extent of victimization.

Discussion

This investigation attempted to establish the predictive validity of various correlates of domestic violence victimization among women employing a longitudinal design. Race, age, income, and social isolation or lack of social support have been found to be related to victimization fairly consistently using cross-sectional methodologies (cf. Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986). The present investigation was not able to examine the predictive utility of race due to the almost unanimous racial composition of the sample. Age was examined and not found to differentiate between eventual victims and nonvictims. However, again the failure of the finding to emerge may be the result of a fairly restricted range of ages. Likewise, social support resources did not prove to be significant predictors of victimization.

The results of this investigation do support the predictive utility of premarital and early marital economic resources such as income, economic security, and job security and premarital and early marital psychological resources such as aggression, especially vis a vis the spouse, and negative stress. These

factors proved to be significant predictors of victimization status and variance in extent of victimization among victimized wives. Women with lower incomes and who were less secure with their jobs and with their economic situation generally were more likely to be victims of their husbands' violence and, further, be the victims of more frequent and more severe domestic violence. Likewise, women who were less aggressive, especially in the marriage, and experienced greater levels of negative stress were more likely to be victims and to experience greater severity and frequency of domestic violence.

Although some variables were found to have predictive validity, a greater percentage of variables were not so supported. In part, this may be due to variability in the adequacy of the psychometric properties of the instruments used to assess the various hypothesized risk factors. Some assessment methods were more sophisticated and psychometrically sound (e.g., measures of stress) than others (e.g., sources of support). However, even considering only measures of comparable psychometric properties, there was a low occurrence of significant predictors. This pattern supports previous assertions (cf. Hotaling & Sugarman, 1986) that there is a relative absence of support for a "victim profile." Consistency in the finding of significant characteristics in domestic violence typically has been more true of "perpetrator" characteristics. Likewise with the current sample, a greater number of predictors might have emerged if husband variables, before marriage and six months after marriage, had been selected

as the predictors of wives' victimization during the first year and a half of marriage.

References

Arias, I., & O'Leary, K.D. (1988). Cognitive-behavioral treament of physical aggression in marriage. In N. Epstein, S. Schlensinger, & W. Dryden (Eds.), Cognitive-behavioral therapy with families (pp. 118-150). New York: Brunner/Mazel.

Hotaling, G.T., & Sugarman, D.B. (1986). An analysis of risk markers in husband to wife violence: The current state of knowledge. Victims and Victomology, 1, 101-124.

Jackson, D.N. (1974). Personality Research Form manual. Goshen, NY: Research Psychologists Press.

O'Leary, K.D., & Curley, A.D. (1986). Assertion and family violence. Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 12, 281-289.

Sarason, I.G., Johnson, J.H., & Siegel, J.M. (1978). Assessing the impact of life changes: Development of the Life Experiences Survey. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 46, 932-946.

Sedlak, A.J., Bowen, G.L., Hotaling, G.T., & Sugarman, D.B. (1985, August). Domestic violence and risk factors: Current state of knowledge. Paper presented at the 93rd Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Los Angeles, CA.

Spence, J.J., & Helmreich, R.L. (1978). Masculinity and femininity: Their psychological dimensions, correlates, and antecedents. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Straus, M.A. (1979). Measuring intrafamily conflict and violence: The Conflict Tactics (CT) Scales. Journal of Marriage and the Family, 41, 75-86.

Table 1

Descriptive Characteristics at 18 Months Postmarriage

Variable	Victims	Nonvictims
Mean age in years	24.73 (3.09)	25.21 (2.91)
Mean length of dating relationship in years	2.93 (1.91)	3.23 (2.19)
Mean length of engagement in years	.93 (.60)	1.03 (.70)
Mean years of education	14.35 (1.89)	14.72 (1.96)
Mean number of children	.24 (.43)	.30 (.51)
Mean annual personal income	$14,255 ($6028)	$16,291 ($8963)

Table 2

Premarital Predictors of Victimization Status

Effect	Estimate	Standard Error	Chi-square
Economic			
Employment status	.84	.78	1.15
Annual income	4.90	2.50	3.88*
Job security	.18	.22	.64
Economic security	.01	.17	.00
Standard of living	.07	.18	.17
Social			
Support	.82	1.35	.37
Sources of support	.21	.12	3.02
Temporary shelter	-1.21	1.59	.58
Sources of shelter	-.09	.14	.40
Psychologicacl			
Life events	.06	.07	.67
Positive stress	.04	.04	.90
Negative stress	-.01	.05	.03
Spouse-specific assertion	.02	.02	2.27
Spouse-specific aggression	.06	.02	8.46**
General aggression	.21	.09	5.07**
Abasement	.12	.09	1.69
Autonomy	.15	.10	2.35
Defendence	.10	.10	1.13
Dominance	.15	.10	2.21
Impulsivity	-.08	.09	.67

*$p < .05$
**$p < .01$

Table 3

Early Marital Predictors of Vicitimization Status

Effect	Estimate	Standard Error	Chi-square
Economic			
Annual income	3.70	2.70	1.82
Job security	.07	.18	.14
Economic security	-.32	.15	4.56*
Standard of living	-.03	.16	.03
Social			
Support	-.42	.53	.64
Source of support	.18	.14	1.67
Temporary shelter	.13	1.26	.01
Source of shelter	-.07	.16	.19
Psychological			
Life events	-.02	.06	.14
Positive stress	-.01	.04	.03
Negative stress	-.08	.04	3.21
Spouse-specific assertion	.00	.02	.08
Spouse-specific aggression	.09	.02	24.29**
Attitudes toward women	-.03	.02	2.43
Inferiority/ Superiority	.32	.21	2.25

*$p < .05$
**$p = .0001$

Table 4

Premarital Predictors of the Extent of Victimization Among Victimized Wives

Variable	Partial R^2	Model R^2	F
Economic			
Job security	.12	.12	7.78*
Psychological			
Spouse-specific aggression	.15	.15	10.61*

*$p < .01$

Table 5

Early Marital Predictors of the Extent of Victimization Among Victimized Wives

Variable	Partial R^2	Model R^2	*F*
Economic			
Job security	.13	.13	8.91*
Psychological			
Negative stress	.10	.10	7.38*

*$p < .01$